

## **Chicago Heights Public Meeting**

**Thursday, August 9, 2012, 6:30 – 8:20 p.m.**

**Unincorporated area of St. Louis County, Missouri**

**Elmwood Park Neighborhood/Subdivision**

**Meeting Location: First Baptist Church of Elmwood Park**

A public meeting was held by the St. Louis County Housing Authority with residents of the Elmwood Park Community, St. Louis, Missouri, on Thursday, August 9, 2012.

### **Agencies Represented**

- St. Louis County Housing Authority (Susan Rollins, Exec. Director, Patricia Washington, Press Secretary, Mike Jones, Senior Policy Advisory for County Housing Authority and two other staffers)
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources (Wane Roberts, Project Manager)
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (Jonathan Garoutte, Michelle Hartman)
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (Denise Jordan-Izaguirre)
- Environmental Protection Agency (Mary Peterson, Section Chief, Pamela Johnson, Environmental Justice, Chris Whitley, OPA Press, Belinda Young, OPA Community Involvement)

### **Agenda**

Facilitator, Susan Rollins, Executive Director, Housing Authority

Welcome & Remarks, Susan Rollins

Presentations by MDNR, EPA & MDHSS

The Housing Authority owns several properties in the Elmwood Park community. The St. Louis County Executive Staff of the Housing Authority encouraged the neighbors to talk with other neighbors about activity surround the Chicago Heights Site. Community members received the notification flyer announcing the meeting held on August 9, 2012. Susan stated that the meeting would cover effects of the contamination, plans for the future, and remedies.

### **Wane Roberts, MDNR**

- Historical background and their involvement since the 1990s
- Previous sampling events
- TCE contamination discovered in the groundwater plume
- Attempts to treat groundwater but failed
- Vapor intrusion in homes from the groundwater plume
- Impact of vapor intrusion in homes
- Previous sampling events by MDNR
- Impacted homes in the community

### **Mary Peterson, EPA**

- Overview of vapor intrusion and how it moves into homes
- Explained how groundwater is different from drinking water (the residents are not drinking the groundwater)
- Explained difference in sampling to determine vapor intrusion at sub slab areas and in living spaces

- Explained how vapor intrusion is treated (drilling in basement floor)
- How residents can help (allow access to set up sampling canister)
- Asked residents to allow contractors access
- Explained how vapor is extracted out of the homes using mitigation systems
- **Question:** What's the point if you pump the vapors outside the home where people breathe air and children play?

### **Jonathan Garroute, MDHSS**

- Role of MDHSS and primary focus
- Questions from community are always "how does this impact me and my family's health?"
- Protection from cancer or chemical in everyday life
- Vapor intrusion occurring in some homes
- One sampling conducted in May in a few homes, but we need more data

**Comment:** This was discovered in 1994, 18 years ago, we have been exposed for 18 years.

**Question:** What are some of the things we should be looking for if we have been exposed long term? "I recently learned that my son has been exposed and now he has a heart condition."

**Question:** Where are the other hazardous sites located that have these chemicals?

**Question:** How many sites are in residential areas with homes and children?

**Question:** Are there other hazardous sites with these chemicals? Where are those sites?

**Answer:** When talking about VI, it is evolving...10 years ago, it was not being considered. New Jersey may have been the first state to start looking at it.

**Question:** How many are in residential areas with homes and children?

**Answer:** We can work to develop that data

**Question:** Are there databases that citizens can go to for information? Is it public or private?

**Answer:** Information is available at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
And ToxFaqs; MDNR is developing a database to share other release sites.

**Question:** How many are in the state of Missouri and how many in residential areas?

**Comment:** "These facts should have been disclosed to me before I purchased property.

**Answer:** There are state laws that require disclosure rights to buyers

**Question:** When you said you had tested homes, what area did you do your testing?

**Answer:** Tested in the northern area that had groundwater concerns.

**Question:** Where did you test?

**Answer:** (Elmwood, Meeks, Wichert, Waremeyer)

**Question:** DNR, you said you sampled 3 apartments, 7 homes; did you find levels in every home?

**Question:** What is the screening level?

**Question:** Of the 7 homes and 3 apartments, did you find any contaminants?

**Answers:** There were detections

**Question:** Was any area of Olivett impacted?

**Question:** 9970 Page...how far around 9970 Page would you say that is?

**Answer:** 100 feet was used as guidance

**Question:** What's your estimation of the contamination? Do you have data showing anything further out?

**Answer:** We have to do more sampling

**Question:** 1424 Dielman, next door to apartments...have you tested anything on Dielman and Chicago Heights east? I have a funeral home and I am asking that you test this property.

**Question:** How can you say that there is no groundwater contamination further away from the site?

**Answer:** Use a stepping out approach (planned approach)

**Question:** What are the overall effects of this groundwater chemical that would be harmful to residents?

**Answer:** MDHSS explained TCE impacts (long and short term exposure)

**Question:** Re: 1446 Wischert; is this too far away? I have seen water coming into my basement. Had to have a sump pump put in. Had to have my basement torn out, got behind my dry wall to waterproof. I have a medical problem; asthma, bronchitis, heart problems. My son has heart disease. I've lived in my house since 1974.

**Question:** Is there a smell of any kind?

**Answer:** No, even at high levels of concentration, it is low.

**Question:** Exposed to dampness; could my house be tested?

**Answer:** It sounds like the appropriate thing to do is to use this step out approach

**Question:** Kathleen Burkett, St. Louis County Council. Has the original site been cleaned up?

**Answer:** MDNR; conducted remedial oxidation treatment into the soil. Results were not very effective; clay dirt in this area was not good.

**Question:** Re: groundwater plume....It could be left or moved out or is that practical?

**Question:** How many years? If the original site is still there, is it still contaminating or has it stopped?

**Answer:** Businesses have tried but it is not complete????

**Question:** Has the original source been cleaned up? Are they currently adding to contamination in the ground?

**Answer:** No

**Question:** Solvents already in the ground, are they still contaminating the groundwater?

**Answer:** Yes

**Question:** Is water in the basement a flag that we have a problem?

**Answer:** Shallow groundwater happens to be in your location. Difference is where the actual contamination is for what is important with our work.

**Question:** Pastor of church next door. We are located on the corner of Meeks and Dielman and I am concerned with water in the basement of the church. How was information disseminated? How as information shared?

I have members of the church from the community

Note: When EPA inherits sites such as Chicago Heights (state referral) EPA inherits the consequences from little to no community outreach from state oversight. MDNR has had oversight of the Chicago Heights Site since 1999 (13 years). An immediate concern from citizens in the impacted community of Elmwood Park is that the information shared at the meeting hosted by the St. Louis County Housing Authority on 8/9/12, was the first time they had heard anything about a concern of groundwater and vapor intrusion in homes. This lack of knowledge created an atmosphere of fear and a lack of trust. They also, like many other communities became concerned as to whether they were drinking and using contaminated water. Many questioned MDNR's past practices to address contamination at the site, and its failure to make residents aware of the issue. Some residents began to associate current and past health problems among family members with vapor intrusion from groundwater contamination. They also began to question how their community compared to other communities with similar contamination...those communities with residents and children. Attendees questioned public information vs. private information when questions rose about whether there were databases available for citizens to become more familiar with environmental issues and communities impacted by contamination. Other concerns related to the overall health effects from the vapor intrusion, how it is harmful to residents, if their homes were impacted, and the fact that information should have been disclosed before some residents purchased homes in the area.